

A Framework for Emancipatory Social Science

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October, 2007

I. What is Emancipatory Social Science?

Emancipatory: identifies a central moral purpose in the production of knowledge – the elimination of oppression and the creation of the conditions for human flourishing.

Science: recognizes the importance of systematic scientific knowledge – not just philosophy and social criticism – about how the world works for this task.

Social: implies that human emancipation depends upon the transformation of the social world, not just the inner self.

II. The Three Tasks of Emancipatory Social Science

- 1. Diagnosis & Critique***
- 2. Envisioning Alternatives***
- 3. A Theory of Transformation***

Task 1. DIAGNOSIS & CRITIQUE
Normative foundations:
radical democratic egalitarianism

- 1. Social justice: *In a socially just society, all people would have broadly equal access to the necessary material and social means to live flourishing lives.***
- 2. Political justice: *In a politically just society, all people would have broadly equal access to the necessary political means to contribute to the collective control of the conditions and decisions which affect their common fate.***

Task 1

The core critique of capitalism

Capitalism simultaneously creates potentials for universalized human flourishing and expansive democracy and blocks the full realization of those potentials.

- 1. Capitalism perpetuates eliminable forms of human suffering and obstructs the universalization of conditions for human flourishing.**
- 2. Capitalism blocks the full realization of democracy.**

Task 2. Envisioning Alternatives

I. Desirability

**(1)
Desirable
alternatives**

II. Viability

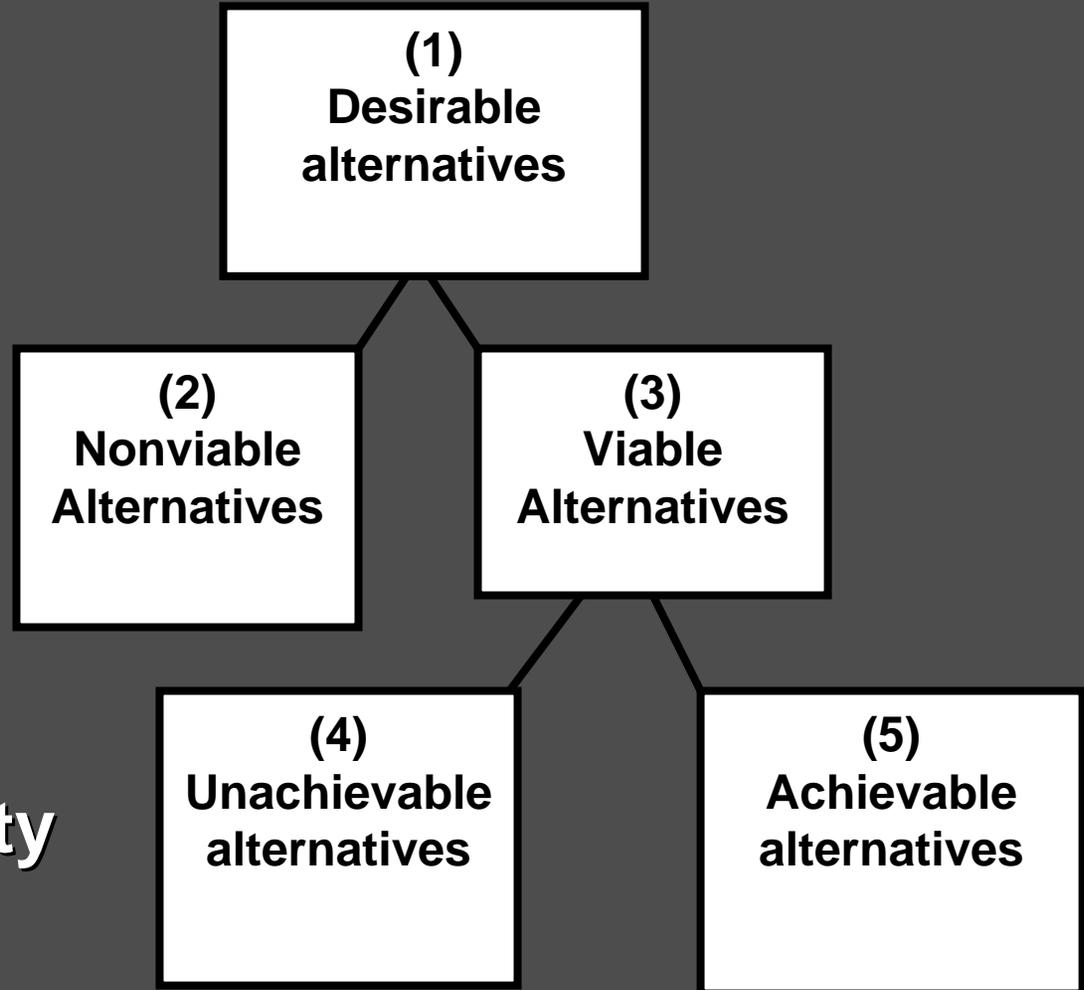
**(2)
Nonviable
Alternatives**

**(3)
Viable
Alternatives**

III. Achievability

**(4)
Unachievable
alternatives**

**(5)
Achievable
alternatives**



Task 2. Viable Alternatives: *Envisioning Real Utopias*

Core Idea:

Institutional designs that directly embody ideals of democratic egalitarianism and which, if implemented, would be sustainable.

Four Examples

- 1. Basic Income**
- 2. Participatory budgeting**
- 3. Open source knowledge production**
- 4. The Quebec social economy**

Task 3. Elements of a Theory of Transformation

1. A Theory of Social Reproduction: *obstacles to emancipatory transformation*
2. A theory of gaps, limits and contradictions of reproduction: *possibilities of transformation*
3. A theory of trajectories of unintended social change: *future prospects for obstacles and possibilities*
4. A theory of transformative strategy: *what is to be done?*

Task 3

Strategic logics of Transformation

1. Ruptural (radical break in institutions):
Revolutionary socialist tradition
2. Interstitial (build new institutions in the cracks of the system): Anarchist tradition
3. Symbiotic (use existing institutions to solve problems in ways that transform institutions): Social democratic tradition

**The full text of book-in-progress,
Envisioning Real Utopias
can be found at:**

www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright